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DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIAL STATISTICS: POPULATION AND HOUSING CENSUSES; CIVIL REGISTRATION AND VITAL STATISTICS; STATISTICS ON SPECIAL POPULATION GROUPS; AND STATISTICS ON THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

Report on demographic and social statistics, including statistics on the advancement of women

Report of the Secretary-General

SUMMARY

The present report provides an overview of the 1990 World Population and Housing Census Programme carried out by countries and areas of the world. It also briefly sets out the common issues emerging from national experiences with a view to considering necessary substantive preparations by the United Nations Secretariat for the 2000 round of population and housing censuses (paras. 6-16).

This report presents progress in the implementation of the International Programme for Accelerating the Improvement of Vital Statistics and Civil Registration Systems, including the highlights of the workshop held in Buenos Aires in December 1991 (paras. 17-28). It also presents work on the development both of statistics on special population groups including children, the elderly and persons with disabilities and of related databases to meet efficiently the needs of users and programmes (paras. 29-38). Activities for the development of statistics on the advancement of women are reviewed in sect. IV (paras. 39-56), including compilation and dissemination, development of statistical concepts and methods, and coordination.

Points for discussion by the Statistical Commission are covered (para. 57).

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INTRODUCTION

1. The present report, submitted in response to requests made by the Statistical Commission at its twenty-sixth session, 1/ deals with demographic and social statistics, including those related to the advancement of women. In particular, it includes information on the progress achieved in the 1990 World Population and Housing Census Programme, in the implementation of the International Programme for Accelerating the Improvement of Vital Statistics and Civil Registration Systems and related methodological work, on the development of statistics on special population groups and databases, and on the development of statistics on the advancement of women. Furthermore, this report contains a discussion of issues that are emerging in the 1990 round of population and housing censuses and of advance substantive preparations that may be undertaken by the United Nations Secretariat to assist countries in the next round of population and housing censuses, as well as of the preparation of statistics for the 1995 World Conference on Women.

I. POPULATION AND HOUSING CENSUSES

A. Progress in the 1990 World Population and Housing Census Programme

2. Pursuant to the recommendation of the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 1985/8, 2/ in the 1990 census round, 194 out of 232 countries or areas had, as of 1 April 1992, already carried out or planned to have a population and/or housing census during the period 1985-1994. This leaves 38 countries or areas for which no information about their census plans is available and/or no census is planned. The breakdown of countries or areas by continent is shown in the table. In certain countries, census preparations had actually been made but for various reasons the census was postponed to a date after 1994 or cancelled. In some, population registers and administrative records systems were used to provide census-type data on population and housing.

3. Furthermore, 29 countries or areas took more than one census. Thus, a total of 225 censuses have been conducted so far in the 1990 round. Some important achievements in this round include an overall improvement in many phases of census-taking particularly in regard to data processing, owing to the widespread adoption of new technology by developing countries.

4. Among the developing countries, the 1990 census decade has witnessed a wide use of microcomputers particularly in the processing of data. In the 1980 round, microcomputers were used by a few countries with small populations. In the present decade, these small but powerful machines have proven capable of handling the processing of very large censuses. Moreover, microcomputers have enabled the decentralization of data entry and processing. They have also facilitated the tabulation of local area population characteristics and the timely use of such data. Many countries have exploited this technology extensively for the purpose of carrying out

Countries or areas having taken or planning to take a census, and census type, 1985-1994, by continent or region (as of 1 April 1992)

Continent or region	Total number of countries or areas	Countries or areas			Census type			Total number of censuses taken
		Planning no census	Having taken or planning to take at least one census	Having taken or planning to take at least two censuses	Population and housing	Population only	Housing only	
Africa	56	11	45	2	36	10	1	47
Asia	50	8	42	9	41	9	3	53 a/
Europe	43	9	34	5	36	3	0	39
North America	37	4	33	1	32	2	0	34
Oceania	32	5	27	11	33	5	0	38
South America	14	1	13	1	14	0	0	14
Total world wide	232	38	194	29	192	29	4	225 a/

a/ Including two countries each of which having taken, or planning to take, more than two censuses.

data processing and other census activities. As a result, it is anticipated that the time-lag between the census enumeration and the release of census results will be shorter in the 1990 round as compared with the previous rounds.

5. In the 1990 round, there has also been a striking increase in the number of housing censuses carried out by countries mostly in conjunction with population censuses. As shown in the table, 192 countries or areas have conducted or will conduct a population and housing census in the 1990 round, representing an increase of 20 countries or areas over the 1980 round. However, it appears that the results of housing censuses are sometimes only partially processed and utilized.

B. Emerging issues and needs for the 2000 World Population and Housing Census Programme

6. Despite the overall progress in the 1990 round, a number of issues were faced by countries in the course of carrying out their population and housing censuses. The issues differed among countries depending on the national census institution and the capability that had been built over the past census decades, political developments, public support and cooperation and, finally, resources. Notwithstanding, some issues were common to a large number of developing countries and can be expected to arise in the next round of censuses. They therefore need to be carefully considered with a view to consolidating present achievements and contributing to further efficiency and effectiveness in future censuses and surveys. To this end, experience of both developed and developing countries with well-established census capabilities can provide valuable lessons if shared globally and regionally.

7. In reviewing the experience of the current round of population and housing censuses, several issues emerge as particularly important in planning the 2000 round of population and housing censuses, particularly from the perspective of developing countries. The issues in the pre-census phase include (a) a late start and lack of adequate preparations, caused particularly by time constraints, in the areas of census cartography, publicity and training and (b) a high turnover of census staff which in turn has accentuated the problems of national and subnational census offices.

8. With respect to census content, the basic topics recommended by the United Nations in Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses (ST/ESA/STAT/SER.M/67) 3/ and in Supplementary Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses (ST/ESA/STAT/SER.M/67/Add.1) 4/ as well were widely covered by countries in the 1990 census round, ensuring greater use and comparability of census results at both the national and the international level. However, an emerging issue relating to census content is that of the strategy of data collection to be used. The study of national practices in the 1990 census round showed that in many countries two different kinds of questionnaires were utilized, namely a long and a short census form. The short census form included basic questions only, applicable to the entire population; the long

census form included a wide range of specific questions on various census topics designed to meet the requirements of users and applicable to a sample of the population. In a number of instances, the issue that arose centred on the choice of topics and/or the size of the sample to be used for the long form. National practices differed and international guidance would be useful in addressing these issues.

9. In the phase of data processing and data utilization, countries (especially the developed countries) found that they had to develop a wider range of census products and ones that were based on a larger variety of media (computer tape, diskettes and compact disk read only memory (CD-ROM), among others) responding better to users' specific needs. This demand is expected to continue and intensify in the 2000 round of censuses; the issue, therefore, before many census offices in all parts of the world will be how to meet, and readily adapt their census products and services to, changing user needs. In this regard, an issue that may be expected to become serious in the context of the 2000 round is the likely competition from private vendors who have purchased access to census statistics. Such vendors would be in a better position to meet quickly the specific needs of users and in so doing could well deprive census organizations of a source of income. These new census products also raise issues related to the confidentiality of industrial census responses.

10. In the light of the above-mentioned issues emerging from the 1990 round, a number of needs may already be identified in connection with preparations for the 2000 round of population and housing censuses. The list does not exhaust all needs and some additional issues may emerge before the present census decade comes to an end in 1994, particularly in the areas of evaluation and utilization of census data, courses of activity upon which many countries are now embarking. The post-enumeration surveys (PES) for census evaluation are fast becoming a standard practice in countries. However, further methodological studies and guidance on their organization and conduct are needed. Moreover, the use of PES results in censuses requires exchange of national practices and views in the context of future census planning.

11. The foremost need among countries is a continuous programme of cartographic activities covering the pre- and post-enumeration phases of censuses as part of the programme for intercensal data-collection activities in population and other areas, as well as for the next round of population and housing censuses. Some countries that were interested in utilizing the Geographic Information System (GIS) in the 1990 round could not introduce it for various reasons including time constraints. Work in this area, which is designed to assist countries, would be valuable for the 2000 round of censuses.

12. Furthermore, studies to develop improved methodology including questionnaire design, and data-capture procedures including the use of the Optical Mark Reader (OMR) application in developing countries, would be useful in the context of the 2000 round of censuses. The use of OMR or Optical Character Reader (OCR) technology has greatly facilitated data processing in censuses. However, the high cost associated with the requirements,

particularly those of high-quality paper and precision in printing of questionnaires, inhibits many developing countries from adopting this kind of technology. This issue will emerge in the context of the 2000 round and therefore assessment of data-processing technologies for potential use and appropriateness in the light of census requirements and technological environments of the developing countries would assist in planning the 2000 round of censuses.

13. Moreover, emerging user needs at the required geographical level and in respect of census topics require further attention so that use of sampling appropriate to the contents of the long forms can be increasingly adopted.

14. The use of long and short forms, which was widespread in the 1990 round, is expected to gain further momentum in the 2000 round as a means of reducing census cost and improving quality. Comparative studies of country experiences including specific problems encountered would therefore be useful to countries.

15. The problem of staff turnover and shortage was particularly serious in countries that proceeded each decade to put together an ad hoc organization for carrying out a population and housing census. The need for a permanent organization that could be drawn from the 1990 staff cannot be overemphasized in the context of future censuses. Moreover, the census interval of 10 years is a long period considering the demand for socio-economic data in modern times; therefore an intercensal survey that in a sense would also serve as a sound basis for preparation of the decennial census is needed in most countries.

16. As noted in paragraph 5, the 1990 round witnessed a significant increase in the number of population and housing censuses by countries, reflecting the importance of housing and related data for purposes of human settlements policies and programmes. The United Nations recommendations on housing censuses date back to the 1970s and developments since, with respect particularly to housing topics and tabulations, need a detailed review by an expert group with a view to validating and/or proposing any necessary modifications for adoption by countries in the 2000 round.

II. PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTING THE INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMME FOR ACCELERATING THE IMPROVEMENT OF VITAL STATISTICS AND CIVIL REGISTRATION SYSTEMS

A. Workshops on civil registration and vital statistics systems and related methodological work

17. At its twenty-sixth session, the Statistical Commission endorsed the International Programme for Accelerating the Improvement of Vital Statistics and Civil Registration Systems which had been developed jointly by the Statistical Division of the United Nations Secretariat, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Institute for Vital Registration and Statistics (IIVRS). To

coordinate and implement effectively this Programme, a Coordinating Committee for the International Programme, consisting of staff from its principal sponsor organizations, was formally established in May 1991.

18. Furthermore, the Commission welcomed the suggestion to conduct workshops in Latin America and Africa as part of the International Programme and expressed its appreciation to the Government of Argentina for offering to host one of the workshops. Accordingly, after intensive preparations, the Latin American Workshop on Strategies for Accelerating the Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems was held in Buenos Aires from 2 to 6 December 1991. The National Institute of Statistics and Censuses of Argentina, on behalf of the Government of Argentina, made excellent arrangements for carrying out the Workshop, including the appointment of a local organization committee to assist the United Nations in all preparatory work and implementation of the workshop.

19. Eleven Spanish- or Portuguese-speaking countries of Central and South America in which the figure for birth and/or death registration was 80 per cent or above were invited to participate in the workshop and included Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, Panama, Uruguay and Venezuela. These countries were viewed as having high potential for rapid improvement of their national systems.

20. The two documents indicated below, prepared by the Statistical Division of the United Nations Secretariat as part of the International Programme, were sent to countries together with the invitation for preparation of the country reports according to a standard outline:

(a) "A guide for a review and assessment of the civil registration and vital statistics systems";

(b) "Guidelines to prepare a national report on the civil registration and vital statistics systems".

21. The Workshop was attended by a total of 87 participants: 26 official delegates from the 11 Latin American countries and Denmark and Norway; 18 official observers (15 from Argentina and 3 from Brazil); 4 members of the local organizing committee and 30 additional observers from Argentina. In addition, 9 representatives attended the workshop from the following organizations: the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the Latin American Demographic Centre, the Inter-American Statistical Training Center, the International Institute for Vital Registration and Statistics, the Pan American Health Organization/WHO, the Inter-American Children's Institute and the United Nations. The Workshop was conducted in Spanish and English.

22. The close involvement of the national statistical offices of 11 participating countries was sought seven months before the workshop. The advance active involvement of countries, both in the selection of country representatives and the timely preparation of reports, contributed

significantly to the achievement of the workshop goals. Those goals involved, inter alia, the assessment of the adequacy of national registration and vital statistics processes, coverage, quality and reliability; ways of promoting awareness of national registration and vital statistics systems; the role of civil registration and vital statistics systems in each participating country in connection with various uses and applications; and various approaches to solving the problems present in the national systems and expediting their improvement in the short, medium and long terms.

23. In all, 13 detailed comprehensive national reports on the current status of the civil registration and vital statistics systems were presented to the Workshop. The Workshop made suggestions regarding the main components of a national master plan for improvement of the systems and emphasized the need for such a plan (on which participants agreed to work further as a follow-up activity to the Workshop). The Workshop emphasized the need for strong and steady commitment by countries, as well as reliance on their own resources in implementing reforms of nationwide scope.

24. In this connection, the Workshop recommended that linkage of the output of the civil registration and vital statistics systems be carried out with respect to one or two main uses that were of vital interest. For instance, it was suggested that cooperation and collaboration be strengthened with:

(a) Specific ongoing health programmes, inter alia, on infant, child and maternal mortality and family planning, for which the output of the civil registration and vital statistics systems could be a primary source of information in connection with monitoring their impact;

(b) Population identification services to protect against forgery and counterfeiting of such important documents as have a direct impact on crime prevention and public security, accuracy of electoral rolls, pension funds claims and so on.

25. An important development at the Workshop was the creation of a Committee of Registrar Generals in Latin America to promote and expedite the development of civil registration and vital statistics in the region. Furthermore, following the Workshop, Argentina set in motion a number of activities to streamline its federative systems of civil registration and vital statistics systems entirely with national resources.

26. In the area of methodology, a study was undertaken on national procedures in over 100 countries or areas for recording vital events on a daily basis and reporting them subsequently to the agency or agencies that compiled continuous vital statistics. The study, which was a supplement to the Handbook of Vital Statistics Systems and Methods, volumes I and II, 5/ dealt with issues of layout and content, numbering, filing, storage, retrieval and preservation of records for civil registration and vital statistics purposes. (The first volume of the Handbook was recently published; the second volume was published in 1985.) Advantages and disadvantages of different vital records and their scope were examined to assist countries in decision-making and reform of their present systems.

B. National efforts towards upgrading vital statistics and civil registration systems

27. At the national level, a number of feasibility studies have been conducted, with funds provided by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), to assess the present status of civil registration and vital statistics systems and identify needs, in order to bring those systems to a level of coverage that is almost complete and able to yield timely data. Improved vital statistics data, particularly on live births and child deaths, will enable Governments and other organizations to monitor under-five and infant mortality rates, and maternal mortality rates. The countries involved include Brazil, Ecuador, Mexico and the Philippines. Subject to the availability of extrabudgetary resources, similar feasibility studies may be conducted in selected countries in the future. The five feasibility studies are planned for publication and wide distribution to countries. In addition, two workshops are planned (one in Africa and another in Asia), as part of the International Programme, to improve civil registration and vital statistics systems. The International Programme includes plans for technical studies on data processing and computerization of vital statistics and civil registration systems including procedures for storage and retrieval of vital records in the future.

28. Work also includes the provision of substantive support to technical cooperation projects funded by the United Nations Population Fund that have been devoted to strengthening civil registration and vital statistics systems in the following countries: Benin, Botswana, the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Jordan, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mauritania, Morocco, Myanmar, the Niger, Nigeria, Sao Tome and Principe, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen.

III. STATISTICS ON SPECIAL POPULATION GROUPS AND DATABASES

29. Work on special population groups focused on children, persons with disabilities and elderly persons and involved, inter alia, (a) development of concepts, definitions and classifications; (b) data-collection strategies and international database development; (c) training manuals and handbooks; and (d) technical cooperation including training workshops and advisory services.

30. In 1991, an Interregional Workshop on Developmental Delay and Disability among Children Living in Especially Difficult Circumstances was held in Bangkok, Thailand, from 9 to 13 September 1992. This international workshop was conducted by the Statistical Division of the United Nations Secretariat in collaboration with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Government of Thailand. Special attention was given to survey methods for the study of developmental delay and disability among children living in special circumstances, for example, in emergency areas, marginal settlements and on the street.

31. With respect to people with disabilities, the International Disability Statistics Database (DISTAT, version 2) is being prepared for dissemination in 1993. DISTAT contains national disability statistics from censuses, household surveys and administrative registries, and presents data on 12 major socio-economic and demographic topics concerning disability. DISTAT, version 2 will include data provided by countries in response to the Demographic Yearbook Special Questionnaire on Ageing.

32. A technical manual on methods of collecting and analysing disability statistics is under preparation. This manual will provide case-studies of national survey experience in disability data collection. A review of national approaches for disability data collection in population censuses and administrative records will also be presented.

33. An International Workshop on Development and Dissemination of Statistics on Persons with Disabilities, organized by the Statistical Division of the United Nations Secretariat and Statistics Canada, was held in Ottawa, Canada, from 13 to 16 October 1992. The Workshop was to be conducted in English and French. It was intended to provide a forum for discussion of national work and to consider the need for international recommendations on disability statistics. The Workshop also considered the concerns of producers of disability statistics, including survey directors and data users in both government offices and research centres, regarding the need for comparability and quality of disability data.

34. Furthermore, an Expert Group Meeting on Disability Statistics is being planned by the Statistical Division of the United Nations Secretariat in collaboration with a national statistical office for 1993, subject to extrabudgetary sources of funding. The purpose of the Expert Group Meeting will be to review national experience and to prepare international guidelines needed for improved methods of collection, international comparability and effectiveness of disability statistics. The Expert Group will also review the above-mentioned manual, which will later be published taking into account the comments of the Expert Group and other materials presented.

35. The Demographic Yearbook Database, developed prior to the advent of microcomputers, currently exists on the mainframe computer and is essentially a producer's database. Data were hitherto provided on an ad hoc basis to private users and national offices, as well as to others in the international system, on computer tapes. In recent years, as microcomputers have become more widespread, the demand for demographic data on personal computer (PC) diskette has increased. In order to meet these needs, a three-year project, with financial support from UNFPA, is under way to strengthen the existing database. Upon completion, the database will contain demographic and social statistics time-series starting from 1950 and will permit their rapid retrieval and efficient use for international population research, including studies of special population groups.

36. In addition, to facilitate the reporting of demographic statistics for use in the Demographic Yearbook in an efficient manner, national statistical

offices have frequently requested that they be given the option of providing data in diskettes instead of filling out paper questionnaires. Work has therefore begun so that countries in the future can provide data either in paper questionnaires or on diskettes.

37. The first output from the new database under development will include a special issue of the Demographic Yearbook on population ageing and the situation of elderly persons. It is currently in preparation and will present statistical tables giving 40-year trends in population ageing with respect, inter alia, to marital status, family and living arrangements, changes in mortality, fertility, economic activity and disability among the elderly.

38. Work is also in progress on a companion database comprising principally statistics from housing censuses and related socio-economic data. Pursuant to the decision of the Statistical Commission at its twenty-sixth session, the Human Settlements Questionnaire was sent to countries in February 1992. The Questionnaire was designed on the basis of expert group recommendations and reviewed in detail by the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) and the regional commissions. It covers data on population from the Demographic Yearbook Database, housing infrastructure, land use and a few other topics. Data are requested at the country level, for urban/rural areas and for the four largest cities as well. In order to facilitate data entry and to improve quality of data, a microcomputer application was prepared. Each country received a paper questionnaire and a diskette together with instructions for electronic data entry. The final product is to be a Housing and Human Settlements Statistics Database that aims to serve, among other users, the Global Report on Human Settlements prepared by the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) at the request of the Economic and Social Council.

IV. STATISTICS ON THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

39. Improvement of statistics and statistical methods concerning women was established as an important component of the Statistical Division's work programme in 1979, in response to recommendations of the World Conference of the International Women's Year (1975), 6/ the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 2061 (LXII) and the Statistical Commission at its twentieth session. 7/ Those recommendations have been further elaborated by the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace (1980), 8/ the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace (1985) 9/ and, most recently, the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 1989/106, the Commission on the Status of Women in its resolution 36/4 on the integration of elderly women into development 10/ and its resolutions 35/4 11/ and 36/8 12/ on preparations for the Fourth World Conference on Women, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women in its general recommendation No. 17 (tenth session, 1991) 13/ and the General Assembly in its resolutions 46/98 and 46/167.

40. This legislative concern reflects the increase in demand for gender statistics over the past 15 years arising from national and international programming related to women's concerns, including international events and strategies, and the growing interest and use of those statistics by advocates of policies for the advancement of women and by the media and the public.

41. The work programme of the Statistical Division in this field comprises four types of activity: compilation and dissemination, methodology, technical cooperation and coordination. Technical cooperation activities are discussed in a separate report before the Statistical Commission, except for several aspects particularly relevant to coordination issues, discussed in subsection C below.

A. Compilation and dissemination of statistics and statistical databases on women

42. The objectives of this area of work have been to develop and implement coordinated, integrated dissemination output for statistics and indicators on the situation of women, and to compile and coordinate available data in that output, making those data easy to use and widely available to a wide range of users. In the period 1991-1992, work has concentrated on preparation and dissemination of version 2 of the Women's Indicators and Statistics Database (WISTAT) and the United Nations publication The World's Women, 1970-1990: Trends and Statistics, 14/ which was published in 1991.

43. WISTAT provides a comprehensive set of internationally available gender-based statistics in a single, comprehensive and well-documented source. It was established with UNFPA support, using international statistical sources and without imposing any new burden on national statistical offices. Since its release it has become the pre-eminent consolidated international source and authority for statistics on women. WISTAT covers 178 countries and areas of the world and the full range of national statistics on women that are available at the international level. Version 2 of WISTAT was issued on microcomputer diskettes in 1991 and the WISTAT users guide is in press. 15/ WISTAT has also been used to prepare a number of different outputs, appropriate to the needs of various users. The most ambitious and successful of these is The World's Women, 1970-1990: Trends and Statistics.

44. The World's Women is an experimental publication that uses innovative techniques and formats to highlight the findings on women's conditions world wide and to present statistics and analyses that are readily accessible to a wide group of users. The book has become the most successful research publication ever issued by the United Nations Secretariat. Evidence of this includes sales in the first year in English amounting to 14,000 copies, plus 2,500 free distribution; quotation in the world media; translation of the book into Italian, Japanese, and Turkish (in addition to translation into the official languages of United Nations bodies, namely Arabic, Chinese, French, Russian and Spanish); and citation in the work of the Third Committee, the

Economic and Social Council and the Commission on the Status of Women among other bodies.

45. The World's Women reflects an unprecedented degree of inter-Secretariat and inter-agency collaboration in its preparation, promotion and use. Specifically, there was strong user-producer interaction among the organizations collaborating in its preparation - the Statistical Division of the United Nations Secretariat and the Division for the Advancement of Women of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations Office at Vienna, UNICEF, UNFPA and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).

46. Collaboration is expected to be even more extensive and significant in the development of the second edition of The World's Women, which the Statistical Division will again be responsible for overseeing. The following sponsoring organizations have been identified to date for the new publication: the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNIFEM, UNICEF, UNFPA and, within the United Nations Secretariat, the Division for the Advancement of Women, the Department of Public Information and the Publishing Division. Other active technical collaborators include the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Labour Organisation (ILO), UNESCO and WHO. A technical meeting on preparations for the second issue of The World's Women was held in New York from 15 to 18 June 1992. The meeting was primarily concerned with consideration of substantive improvements that can be made in the second edition, with particular emphasis on recommending ways of improving country coverage. To this end the group recommended greater inter-agency collaboration with the specialized agencies of the United Nations system and the regional commissions working with the Statistical Division to provide supplementary data and estimates.

47. Ongoing work in the development of WISTAT continues to be done in close complementarity with preparation of the next edition of The World's Women. Overall, that work seeks to improve the comprehensiveness and up-to-date status of the data and specifically includes extension of the technical and substantive coverage of WISTAT through the development of new series and topics based on experience gained through the use of WISTAT, the updating of the series and the filling in of gaps, and the development of new database methods for wider dissemination and easier use.

48. Plans for the Fourth World Conference on Women, to be held in 1995, have given a key role to further work on gender statistics at the national level in assembling gender-disaggregated statistics for the elaboration of national reports on the situation of women and at the international level through preparation of an updated version of The World's Women, 1970-1990: Trends and Statistics as an official document for the Conference.

B. Development of improved concepts and methods for statistics on women

49. The general objectives of this programme have been to effect long-term improvements in statistical concepts, methods and data-collection programmes needed to provide a more complete and objective picture of the situation of women and of equality between the sexes. In cooperation with the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), it has made considerable progress towards achieving objectives established in the three global conferences on women for the purpose of improving the coverage of women's activities and concerns in economic statistics of the labour force, national accounts and the informal sector, as discussed by the Statistical Commission at its twenty-fifth session.

50. Following up the methodology worked out in Methods of Measuring Women's Participation and Production in the Informal Sector (ST/ESA/STAT/SER.F/46), 16/ and in subsequent work in Africa sponsored by UNDP in cooperation with the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and INSTRAW as noted in a report of the Statistical Division to the Statistical Commission at its twenty-sixth session publications have been prepared on (a) appropriate data tabulation programmes for use in established population censuses and household surveys to highlight women's role in economic activity, (b) methods for establishing accounts of women's contribution to economic activity as adjuncts to the System of National Accounts (SNA), and (c) a compendium of statistics and case-studies of statistics on the informal sector. 17/ The Statistical Division has also continued to cooperate with INSTRAW and the Inter-Secretariat Working Group on National Accounts to ensure that methodological issues affecting the equitable measurement of women's work in SNA are taken into account in the SNA revision. Extensive results of this work are summarized in chapter 6 of The World's Women, 1970-1990: Trends and Statistics, entitled "Women's work and the economy". As a follow-up to its work on SNA, INSTRAW has initiated a project proposal concerned with the potential of time-use studies and the valuation of women's unremunerated work. The proposal has been submitted to relevant bodies including the Statistical Division, FAO and ILO to elicit substantive comments and establish terms of collaboration.

C. Coordination

51. As gender statistics must cover a very wide range of subject areas, the programme has relied very heavily on a coordinated approach to implement its objectives in compilation, development of statistical methods and technical cooperation.

52. The smooth and efficient functioning of data-sharing arrangements among international statistical services has been ensured by the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) Subcommittee on Statistical Activities. Because of these arrangements, international data compilation and development of databases on women by the Statistical Division have been accomplished with

no additional reporting burden on countries. The Statistical Division worked closely in providing and developing these data with the international organization units most directly concerned with women's issues: the Division for the Advancement of Women of the United Nations Office at Vienna, INSTRAW, UNIFEM, UNFPA, as well as units of other organizations such as the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and FAO. These organizations were then able to channel their major efforts and limited resources into development of new and innovative statistics and methodology rather than duplicate the compilation of existing data and burden countries with additional requests for statistical information. The deliberations and support of the Commission on the Status of Women and the Ad Hoc Inter-Agency Group on Women have also been instrumental to the success of this coordination approach.

53. The framework for the integration of social and demographic statistics (FSDS), established through the coordinated efforts of international statistical services and the Statistical Commission in the late 1970s, has successfully provided the essential conceptual framework within which the specific concerns relating to gender statistics and indicators have been developed.

54. The two most important and successful examples of the output of the programme, the women's statistics database and The World's Women, both reflect the logical, innovative extensions of intensive coordination in data compilation, the former constituting an integrated, readily available, comprehensive and easy-to-use database for microcomputers and the latter demonstrating the great interest of international agencies in, and their commitment to, making statistics available and understandable for policy, programme and advocacy purposes.

55. The commitment to coordination of the Statistical Division has also fostered new initiatives in technical cooperation in gender statistics. Gender statistics issues have been wholly integrated into the development of technical cooperation projects of the National Household Survey Capability Programme (NHSCP) and UNIFEM in, among other countries, Bangladesh, China and Pakistan, with the promotion of essential feedback between country developments and practices and development of methods at the international level.

56. This type of innovative feedback has been especially useful in three areas: development of statistics and methods to measure economic activity in censuses and surveys, 18/ development of statistics and methods to measure women's participation in the informal sector, and assistance to countries in development of national databases and statistical reports on the situation of women. In the informal sector, a major cooperative project comprising a whole range of innovative technical cooperation activities was successfully implemented in Africa, in close collaboration with INSTRAW and ECA. The dual commitments and responsibilities of the Statistical Division in methodology and technical cooperation, and its close working relation with ECA, ensured the development of coordinated and integrated approaches in this complex

field, covering many countries and specialties. Following the successful development and promotion of WISTAT and The World's Women, the Statistical Division, in cooperation with UNIFEM, several interested bilateral agencies and the Joint Consultative Group on Policy (JCGP), is responding to many requests from countries for assistance in developing comparable national databases and reports.

V. POINTS FOR DISCUSSION

57. The Statistical Commission may wish to:

(a) Take note of the progress made in the 1990 World Population and Housing Census Programme and its implementation by countries and areas of the world;

(b) Discuss the emerging issues in the Programme and recommend substantive preparations necessary for the 2000 round of population and housing censuses;

(c) Review the achievements thus far of the International Programme for Accelerating the Improvement of Vital Statistics and Civil Registration Systems and suggest further steps necessary in its implementation;

(d) Comment on the work concerning the improvement of statistics on special population groups including children, the elderly and people with disabilities, and the development of related databases to serve user needs and programmes;

(e) Discuss the collaborative intersectoral arrangements established for integrated development of statistics on the advancement of women and consider ways of strengthening those arrangements, with a view to providing maximum support to national, regional and international preparations for the 1995 World Conference on Women.

Notes

1/ See Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1991, Supplement No. 5 (E/1991/25), paras. 110 and 121.

2/ The adoption of Economic and Social Council resolution 1985/8 was originally recommended to the Council by the Statistical Commission. See Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1985, Supplement No. 6 (E/1985/26), chap. I, sect. A, draft resolution II.

3/ United Nations publication, Sales No. E.80.XVII.8.

4/ United Nations publication, Sales No. E.90.XVII.9.

5/ United Nations publications, Sales Nos. E.91.XVII.5 and E.84.XVII.11.

Notes (continued)

6/ See Report of the World Conference of the International Women's Year, Mexico City, 19 June-2 July 1975 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.76.IV.1), chap. II, sect. A.

7/ Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1979, Supplement No. 3 (E/1979/23), para. 108.

8/ See Report of the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Copenhagen, 14 to 30 July 1980 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.80.IV.3 and corrigendum), chap. I, sect. A.

9/ See Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, 15-26 July 1985 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.85.IV.10), chap. I, sect. A.

10/ See Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1992, Supplement No. 4 (E/1992/24), chap. I, sect. C.

11/ Ibid., 1991, Supplement No. 8 (E/1991/28), chap. I, sect. C.

12/ Ibid., 1992, Supplement No. 4 (E/1992/24), chap. I, sect. C.

13/ See Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 38 (A/46/38), chap. I.

14/ United Nations publication, Sales No. E.90.XVII.3.

15/ WISTAT: Women's Indicators and Statistics Spreadsheet Database for Microcomputers (Version 2): Users Guide and Reference Manual (ST/ESA/STAT/SER.K/10) (United Nations publication, forthcoming).

16/ United Nations publication, Sales No. E.90.XVII.16.

17/ Methods of Measuring Women's Economic Activity, Studies in Methods, Series F, No. 59 (United Nations publication, forthcoming), prepared by Carmen McFarlane as consultant to the United Nations Secretariat; Compendium of Statistics on Women in the Informal Sector, Social Statistics and Indicators, Series K, No. 11 (United Nations publication, forthcoming); and "Methods of compilation, valuation and analysis for accounts of women's contribution to economic activity", working paper of the Statistical Division, prepared by L. Urdaneta-Ferran for the Interregional Workshop on the Development of Statistics on Women's Work in the Informal Sector, held in Seoul, Republic of Korea, 25-29 May 1992.

18/ See, for example, Methods of Measuring Women's Economic Activity (United Nations publication, forthcoming).